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Multi-Media Training for
Cross-Cultural Interaction

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MULTI-MEDIA TRAINING FOR CROSS-CULTURAL INTERACTION

The United States is currently engaged in stability operations on a worldwide basis. These operations require effective cross-cultural interaction between American personnel and people from other lands. Present indications are that this situation will exist for a long time. Emergency situations, such as Vietnam today, require immediate effectiveness in winning support of local citizenry. Our ability to gain and sustain this support in some nations may prevent other emergency situations from arising.

Stability operations require skilled interpersonal interaction with people having markedly different cultural backgrounds. A host nation demonstrates its willingness to cooperate by inviting America to send training and technical support. Sometimes military support is also requested. Information and advice have become an important part of this support. Americans sent abroad to provide information and advice must work closely with their foreign counterparts. In addition to technical knowledge, cross-cultural interaction skills are required for successful mission accomplishment. Cross-cultural experience is not readily available in the United States, but American personnel must develop cross-cultural interaction skills in order to accomplish their assigned tasks. Clearly, a practical training program is required to assist in the development of skills and attitudes necessary for successful mission accomplishment.

TRAINING RATIONALE

One way to prepare personnel for overseas assignments is to immerse them in a particular foreign culture for a period of training. For several reasons this technique, both expensive and time consuming, does not really satisfy the need. Personnel are often assigned to foreign duty on a temporary basis. Many times they move from country to country as they rotate to other jobs. When the assignment is temporary and the personnel are reassigned soon to

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another country or another job, it is not practical to devote a large effort to training an individual for duty in a particular country. Another method of preparation is the "quick and dirty" briefing. This is not the answer either. Such briefings tend to be incomplete and fall short of developing necessary cross-cultural skills and attitudes.

Civilian government agencies, the military, and private industry have a wide variety of foreign-training schemes. They range from short briefings to elaborate and expensive laboratory-centered programs tailored to the individual case. Research and development efforts often have been focused on attempts to provide small-group, team-training solutions. Highly skilled professional leadership is required for these sensitivity training experiences to be successful. A long training period is often necessary. Such requirements are impractical.

From a cost effectiveness standpoint, a cross-cultural interaction training program must be practical to be successful. What is needed is a compact training package that requires trainee involvement through the use of multi-media training techniques and the latest training technology. The best elements of all types of training and all media of communication must be consolidated into a thoroughly practical approach to the problem.

For a number of years System Development Corporation has been creating packages of training materials. These materials have made use of a variety of media. Films, magnetic tapes, manuals, and other paper aids have been included. The materials have been used throughout the United States, in Canada, and as far away as Turkey, Greece, and Norway. This technological know-how and training experience accumulated through the years is now being applied to training for cross-cultural interaction. Development of multi-media training materials, along with techniques for their proper use, is now in progress. The following paragraphs will tell a little bit about some aspects of this development.

THE PACKAGE CONCEPT

Training centers around a set of self-contained, multi-media Planned Aids for Cross-cultural Knowledge, Action and Growth in Effectiveness (PACKAGE). The self-contained PACKAGE concept is important for two reasons. First, few people are academically trained to teach necessary cross-cultural interaction skills and attitudes. Second, the amount of area-specific information required to train personnel for all possible assignments is overwhelming. The advantage of a completely self-contained PACKAGE is evident. An instructor acting as leader can open the PACKAGE and train his students by following the directions and using the materials provided. He need neither concern himself with selection and preparation of subject content nor with the design and production of training aids. His full effort can be given to guiding students through the materials provided.

Some types of PACKAGE content are pictured in figure 1. The exact media mix varies to ensure the maximum psychological involvement of the students. Each package contains such elements as a leader's manual, interaction maps (student planning guides), picture cards, film strips, audio tapes, radio programs, video tapes, motion pictures, synthetic situation settings, question and answer discussion aids, and worksheets for independent study. The students are involved with the leader in planning, content is presented using multi-sensory stimulation, and learning is reinforced through active participation. Interaction skills are developed in a variety of ways. Emotional, as well as intellectual, learning is accomplished by this technique.

The PACKAGE concept is concerned with creating the active learning situation so necessary for training skills and attitudes. It is important to realize that students will not be allowed to be passive. They will be actively involved and participate in a variety of classroom activities. Through these structured, practical classroom experiences, they will develop skills necessary for successful cross-cultural interaction.

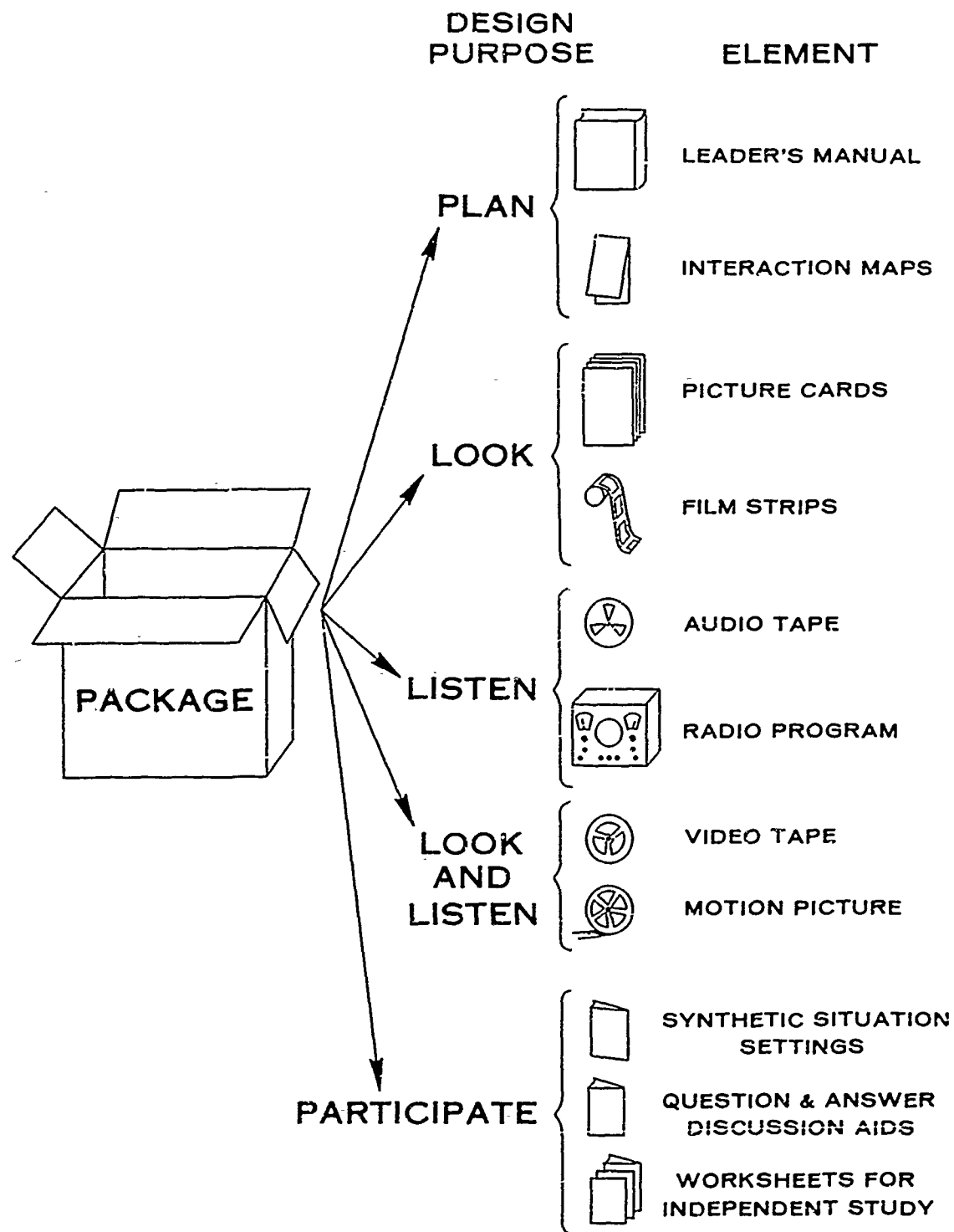


Figure 1. Typical Package Elements Classified by Design Purpose.

MULTI-MEDIA APPROACH TO TRAINING

A multi-media approach to the development of training materials becomes important when maximum training effectiveness in a variety of settings is sought. A medium is defined as a unique combination of materials that is associated with a particular method of presentation. The term multi-media implies that several combinations of materials, along with their particular associated methods of presentation, are intended. Examples of media include words on a printed page, printed pictures, still or moving pictures projected on a screen, audio messages recorded on tape or transmitted for radio reception. Media may be used separately or in combination to accomplish a given training objective. A multi-media approach invites both instructor (leader) and student to plan, look, listen, and participate.

Educators and training experts have been working on an audio-visual aids approach for a long time. Movies, film strips, or slides have been found to be useful for a variety of training purposes. Modern audio-linguistic methods for teaching foreign languages lean heavily on audio tapes and records. Some teaching machines combine visual displays, such as slides or film strips, with a synchronized audio explanation. Video recording, with and without sound, has been used in a number of research-oriented attempts to change attitudes and modify overt behaviors. However, little attention has been devoted to a systems approach to multi-media training.

SYSTEMS THINKING APPLIED TO TRAINING

A systems approach to multi-media training involves all aspects of the problem training objective, subject matter, students, and instructors. Design purpose is established. This activity begins with an operational definition of specific training objectives. Maximum use is made of existing knowledge of multi-media

techniques. The most effective mix and presentation sequence of training media are sought. Principles of learning, such as periodic reinforcement, spaced practice, and multi-sensory stimulation, are applied to the design of training materials.

Subject matter content causes some media to be more effective than others. For example, it is almost impossible to master pronunciation of a foreign language without using audio and participation media. Students and instructors differ as to the medium most effective in promoting learning. Some learn best by looking at pictures or diagrams; others, by listening to words. Design purpose based upon thorough consideration of training objective, subject matter, students, and instructors dictates the particular media to be chosen for implementation.

Typical multi-media training development efforts have been concerned primarily with the design and use of presentation aids, such as films, slides, or audio tapes. These efforts comprise only a part of the multi-media approach used in the design and development of PACKAGES. Additional training development efforts are being devoted to the design of various participation aids.

What is a participation aid? Any documented procedure or set of steps to be followed, or any prompting device provided either to the instructor or student that can be used to encourage and shape behavior in a predetermined manner, is a participation aid. Training objectives precisely define the behaviors that are to be encouraged and shaped. PACKAGE training development efforts center around the determination of the best mix and sequence of both presentation and participation aids. The media thought to be most effective for each kind of aid are being studied and used.

The multi-media approach to training for cross-cultural interaction described above has been adopted because it permits the best possible fit of subject matter to student. Multiple presentation of content units reinforces the training impact of subject matter on the student. A multi-media approach

invites attention and encourages maximum learning by saturating the senses with content to be mastered.

CONCEPT OF THE TRAINING COURSE

A set of PACKAGES will make up a course tailored to train personnel in cross-cultural interaction skills. Each course is modular in design. Each PACKAGE is composed of a number of content units. While some units may be required for all personnel, other units deal specifically with the culture to which the trainee is to be assigned. This permits multiple use of materials. For example, in the case of reassignment, after previous experience in a PACKAGE training course, personnel can first take a refresher unit covering more general topics and then take specific new units that may be required for reassignment.

The multi-media approach to PACKAGE design enables the instructor to present the required information in an interesting manner. By making sure that the methods and procedures for use of the PACKAGE outlined in the leader's manual are followed, the instructor need not deliver lectures himself. For example, after a stimulus medium, such as a movie or radio broadcast, has been presented, the instructor may be advised to lead discussion using a particular participation aid. Following guidance given in the leader's manual, he can set up and execute synthetic situations using simulation techniques. If the instructor and the students wish to study a portion of the PACKAGE in greater depth, additional references cited in the leader's manual may be used.

The PACKAGE concept permits development of a flexible training course. Each course can be of variable length and logically developed. The length of time each trainee spends in the course depends on his requirement for training. Each PACKAGE contains course material designed to be covered in a specific amount of time. After the first, each subsequent PACKAGE will review briefly what has been covered before and then proceed into greater subject matter depth.

If only a basic knowledge is required, he may need only the first PACKAGE. If a more complete knowledge is required, he may need several PACKAGES. He need not study all content units in a given PACKAGE at one time but may take them as other duties allow. This modular approach permits flexibility in meeting trainee needs.

The normal PACKAGE training course assumes a standard classroom. Equipment assumed includes such things as a motion picture projector, slide projector, tape recorder, and video projector. One special piece of gear, the video tape recorder, should be added. Even with these equipment requirements, the training course is still portable and can be used in a variety of locations. If it becomes necessary to move the course to a field location where this equipment is not available, back-up implementation plans, procedures, materials, and media are available in the PACKAGE.

The basic concept of the training course, then, is one of a thorough, practical, flexible course made up of packaged units that are self-contained and portable.

CONTENT UNITS

PACKAGES designed for training cross-cultural interaction skills and attitudes contain subject matter organized into four general content units: General Principles, American Foreign and Domestic Policy, Area Study, and the Language. Unit emphasis within a particular PACKAGE will vary with the training objectives for that PACKAGE.

General Principles

There are certain phenomena that generally occur when Americans are immersed in a foreign environment. The number of these phenomena that occur, and the degree to which they occur, are a function of the time spent in the situation and the physical and psychological adjustments that the individual is capable

of making. Some of these phenomena are common to any foreign experience. For the most part they are caused by the major jolt of living and working in strange surroundings. However, there are other, more subtle feelings that arise and affect performance. These feelings are aroused not by the major and obvious inconveniences of the situation but by insidious sensations of dissociation and frustration. These phenomena range in severity from slight to massive culture shock.

The General Principles unit is designed to isolate and identify important aspects of culture shock, such as feelings of isolation and constant scrutiny. Design intent encompasses other problem areas. For example, difficulties in doing things quickly in a culture prizing a languid life tempo will be pointed out. Common problem areas will be identified and, in layman's terms, the emotional and psychological aspects of the situation will be covered. This will enable the individual to isolate and identify reactions that he has to the foreign environment. Once he understands himself and knows that others also share his reactions, he can concentrate on completing his mission without letting his feelings get the best of him. Some media that can be used to prevent this subject matter include video tapes and self-instructional workbooks.

General principles about working with foreigners and gaining their cooperation are important. These principles are closely related to culture shock phenomena. After elements of effective performance have been outlined and illustrated, positive attitudes regarding the foreign culture and language can be stressed. The importance of enthusiasm about the mission and the necessity for organizational skills can be covered. Common methods of achieving and sustaining support can be outlined. The purpose of this unit is not to teach our personnel to trick foreigners into cooperation or to acquiesce to the native way of doing things but to build a foundation of mutual respect and understanding.

American Foreign and Domestic Policy

The American Foreign and Domestic Policy unit is designed to provide the background information required by American personnel to enable them to interpret America to others. Current foreign and domestic goals, as well as problems, must be clearly understood. While "gut level" feelings about foreign entanglements or our domestic problems may exist, it is a difficult matter to convey these to the foreign mind. This content unit is not intended to teach pat answers to stock questions asked by foreigners. It is intended to instill an understanding of our own culture and institutions in order to enable Americans abroad to respond spontaneously and intelligently to the many questions foreigners have about America, including foreign policy.

Important periods of United States history will be covered to show the similarities between our past problems and problems being experienced by other nations at this time. For example, the goals and principles of our revolution were not so different from those of many emerging nations today. World history during and since the Second World War is of great importance in viewing our foreign policy. Many of the agreements and treaties into which we have entered have a reasonable historic background. If this background is not known, it will be difficult for Americans to converse intelligently with foreigners. In addition, most of the current world situations can be looked at from more than one point of view. This content unit will provide background for the current American position and will look at issues from several points of view.

Our own domestic problems and progress are of great interest abroad, the civil rights issue especially. Other aspects of our culture that are of interest include medicine, the poverty program, Wall Street, and education. A study of our progress, as well as the situation in other countries, will aid in understanding and discussing issues when in a foreign land.

Area Study

The Area Study unit is designed to give the trainee brief but intensive exposure to the history, culture, and contemporary social and political life of the country to which he will be assigned. Local folkways and mores will be stressed. Emphasis will be placed not only on the taboos of the society but also on the reasons for the existence of these taboos. From this exposure, the student will not only be able to behave in a manner acceptable to his host country but also will develop a deeper appreciation and understanding of its culture.

Most Americans know very little about the history and political structure of foreign nations. It is important for the visiting American to be well informed about these subjects. He can thus recognize the reasons for the current political and administrative processes, both formal and informal, with which he will be working. The emphasis here will be not so much on the formal written rules and regulations as on how and why things really work the way they do. By having this knowledge, the visitor may also be recognized as an enlightened individual.

This content unit gives the trainee real experience and practice in using certain instruments, tools, and other artifacts that are peculiar to the foreign area. This practice might range from eating with chop sticks to learning how to use a Turkish toilet. Such knowledge or skill may be more than just an indication of good will and interest in the foreign culture, mission success may depend on it.

The Language

The Language unit provides a knowledge of key language phrases and practice in communicating through an interpreter. While it certainly is not practical to prepare for a temporary duty assignment by learning to be fluent in a foreign

tongue, it is important to have a rudimentary knowledge of the language. Being able to utter a few simple phrases in the native language can do much to gain the cooperation of the foreign national. The fact that the American has tried to learn the language is important.

The spoken language is not the only way of communicating. There are a number of nonverbal means. Gestures and facial expression are important as an aid to understanding everywhere. For example, some cultures require that people stand close together when talking, while in other cultures this might make people uncomfortable. Social protocol and nonverbal communication techniques will be covered also.

In addition, there may be special words and phrases that are necessary in order to complete the mission. The technical terms of radar, mechanics, construction, cooking, and the like must be given appropriate special attention.

If a language barrier exists, overcoming it through use of an interpreter is not a simple matter. There are special techniques that must be developed to maximize communication. These techniques can best be acquired through experience and practice. In this portion of the unit, actual interpretive situations can be simulated with the trainees acting as the interpreter and the parties being interpreted. The video tape medium may be used to record these situations for playback. In some cases it will be possible to incorporate language training into the video taping done for analysis and discussion about the general principles of cross-cultural interaction.

TRAINING OBJECTIVES

PACKAGE production follows the normal training material design and development cycle. First, the training objectives are established. Then necessary information is collected. Next, the training materials are designed, and the specifications written. Training materials are then produced, tested, and evaluated.

Tests are designed to verify that the materials are useful and accurately reflect training objectives. The specific training objectives that guide design and development of PACKAGES are determined for each individual case. These objectives serve as requirements for determining the content and structure of each PACKAGE. Certain general training objectives that guide design and development can be stated however. Multi-media training materials are intended to:

1. Improve social awareness and cross-cultural interaction skills, including techniques for dealing with culture shock phenomena.
2. Give knowledge about general culture shock phenomena.
3. Provide a foundation in American history and policy.
4. Develop an understanding of other points of view about American life and policy.
5. Help the student learn to communicate by mastering key language phrases and developing techniques for speaking through interpreters.
6. Impart knowledge about the foreign culture, complete with practical skills and know-how needed to get along satisfactorily in the culture.

TRAINING CONSIDERATIONS

The PACKAGE approach to training for cross-cultural interaction brings to mind several important training considerations.

1. Each self-contained PACKAGE of multi-media materials is suitable for use in classroom or field setting.
2. Planning aids for the instructor make special leadership training unnecessary for satisfactory PACKAGE use.
3. Participation by the student creates an active learning experience and thus increases the training effectiveness of the materials.

4. Multi-media techniques foster emotional as well as intellectual learning. Skills and attitudes, as well as information, are taught. PACKAGE elements are designed to make appropriate behavior second nature to the American abroad.
5. PACKAGE content and presentation are tailored to fit recognized immediate and long-range training needs.
6. Training effectiveness of each PACKAGE is verified following a systematic, documented plan.
7. Modular construction of PACKAGES makes possible greater production efficiency, permits a variety of options for training use, and facilitates maintenance and simplifies updating of materials.
8. A training PACKAGE is highly mobile. Multiple PACKAGES can be used in a variety of locations at the same time because an expert is not required to teach the course and because back-up media are provided.

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